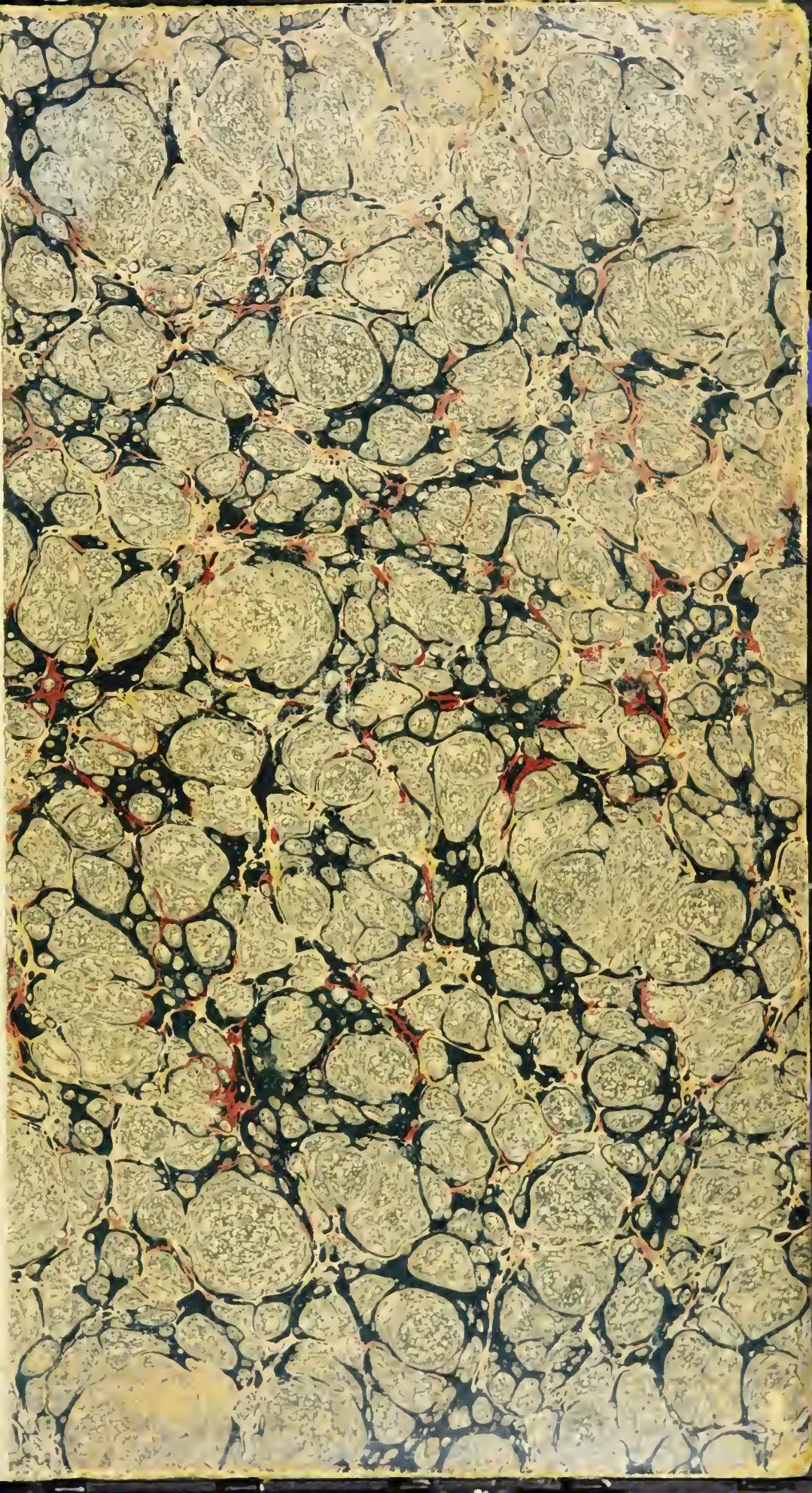


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BY

THOMAS WILLING BALCH

MEMBER OF THE PHILADELPHIA BAR

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# FRANCE IN NORTH AFRICA

1906

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By THOMAS WILLING BALCH

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THE threat of a clash by Germany with France and England over the settlement of the international *status* of Morocco, has revived and brought into view once more the rivalry of the Gaul and the Teuton over the possession of Alsace and Lorraine. While the old animosity of centuries between France and England has passed away, the rivalry between France and Germany still subsists with all the intensity of the past. With some minor exceptions, the former outstanding differences between France and England have been adjusted to their mutual satisfaction through the skillful efforts of King Edward the Seventh, Monsieur Delcassé, and other men. Between the two countries there is no open and smarting wound to keep up the old memories of the times of King Henry the Fifth of England, and Joan of Arc, "la bonne Lorraine." But Alsace and Lorraine rise up be-

tween France and Germany as a barrier to a sincere and lasting adjustment of their relations. Emilio Castelar, the great Spanish orator, once said that "The retention by Germany of Alsace and Lorraine is the one obstacle to the permanent peace of Europe." This seems an extravagant statement, but it is certain that the question of the ownership of Alsace and Lorraine influences every move on the chess board of European politics, and many of them—such as the formation of the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, and the existence of the *entente cordiale* between France and England—are in a large measure outcomes of it.

There are various forces at work continually that disturb and change the balance of power in Europe and the world. The utter paralysis of the Russian Empire, since the Russo-Japanese war, has enabled the Emperor of Germany to take a much more commanding tone towards France and England. The disproportion in the population between Germany and France which has become greater every year in favor of the former power since the war of 1870-71, has also given to Germany a more important position in the affairs of Europe.

The reason why Germany so quickly and completely defeated France in 1870, was, that Prussia, under the skillful leadership of Bismarck and

Von Moltke, was thoroughly prepared for that war, while France was utterly disorganized. The French, owing to their total lack of organization, in vain tried to advance their forces to invade Germany; and it was not until after the proclamation of the Republic that the French under the inspiring leadership of Gambetta were able to show that they still could fight. In 1870 the Germans were only slightly superior in numbers, but to-day the difference in their favor has largely increased, and is likely to increase still more, and we may remember the dictum of the great Napoleon: "Dieu est avec les gros battalions."

A great number of French left Alsace soon after the war, while many Germans settled there, and this movement still goes on. For example, Belfort, which before the Franco-German war was a town of about seven thousand people, now numbers over thirty thousand inhabitants, many of the newcomers having lived before the war in Mulhouse. As they left, their place was filled by Germans. Thus a large part of the population of Alsace is composed to-day of Germans, and not of Alsatians. But it is not only in Alsace that Germany has all the best of this movement of races. At the beginning of the Franco-German war, France had thirty-eight millions of inhabitants and Germany forty-two. Since then the French have increased to only about forty millions, while the Germans have gained in numbers

until they now number sixty millions of people. If this more rapid gain on the part of Germany continues for a few decades more, it will settle the question, as between her and France alone, irrevocably in favor of Germany.

As a future counterpoise to this rapid and overwhelming increase in the population of Germany in contrast with the meager gains of that of France since the close of the Franco-German war, France can begin to look with hope to the slow but steadily growing number of French citizens in her Algerian colony. And this opportunity to build up a New France on the southern side of the Mediterranean Sea was clearly presented to France and her rulers by one of the most brilliant of her writers of the last century. *Prévost-Paradol*, who at the age of only thirty-four was elected a member of *l'Académie Française*, pointed out in 1868, with rare force and clearness in the best known of his works, *La France Nouvelle*, how France was steadily losing ground in Europe from the fact that her people were increasing in numbers less rapidly than the other races, how she should avoid a clash of arms with Prussia and the German states, how the English speaking peoples were extending their influence in many quarters of the globe, how the Slavonic races were looming up, and finally, he showed how France, in order to retain her influence and power in the affairs of the world, should use her utmost en-

deavors to colonize Algeria. The lapse of almost four decades since he wrote the following words show how clearly and prophetically he looked into the future. Speaking of the vital importance to France to have the number of French speaking citizens grow, he said:

“We still have this supreme chance, and this chance is called by a name that should be more popular in France, Algeria. This land is fertile, it is most suitable owing to the nature of its soil to a nation of agriculturists, and the improvement of the water supply, which is in that country the most important question, is in no respect beyond the reach of our science and riches. This land is close enough to us so that the Frenchman, who does not like to lose sight of his home, does not feel there like an exile, and can continue to follow the current of events in the home country. Finally it is for us, owing to its rapprochement to our shores and its configuration also, easy to defend, and the two countries that touch it place no serious limit to our development the day that it may seem necessary for us to expand. May that day soon come, when our fellow-citizens, crowded in our French Africa, will overflow into Morocco and Tunis, and will establish finally that Mediterranean empire that will be not only a satisfaction for our pride but also will certainly be in the future de-

velopment of the world, the last resource of our grandeur!

\* \* \* \* \*

“Africa must not be for us a *comptoir* like India, nor only a camp and a field of exercise for our army, still less a field of experience for our philanthropists; it is a French land that must *as soon as possible* be settled, possessed and cultivated by Frenchmen, if we wish that it can count some day on our side in the settlement of human affairs.”<sup>1</sup>

Since Prévost-Paradol marked out so clearly and prophetically how the future power and influence of France in the centuries to come depended on her building up a New France on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, France has progressed materially in developing her North African Empire. To-day there are more than three hundred thousand French, two-thirds of whom are colonial born, in Algeria. In addition, some seventy thousand Italians, Spaniards, Maltese and other Europeans, have sought the benefits of French citizenship in Algeria through naturalization, thus swelling the total of French citizens in that country to-day to over four hundred thousand people. Every year, too, the sixty thousand Algerian Jews are learning more and more to speak French and more and more to dress like Europeans,

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<sup>1</sup> *La France Nouvelle* par Prévost-Paradol first published in 1868: Paris, 1884, pages 415-418.

thus little by little drawing nearer to a complete assimilation with the French population. And with every passing year the *modus vivendi* that has grown up between the French and the Arabs and the Berbers is improving. The French have built splendid roads, they have put up telegraphs and telephones, and they have constructed railroads and electric trolleys, thereby improving the means of communication. They have organized the judicial system of Algeria so as to insure justice to the Mohammedans as well as to the Jews and themselves. They are slowly bringing the benefits of modern scientific medicine to the Mohammedan population, to the women as well as to the men. And they have blessed the country with an increased and more diffuse supply of water by sinking artesian wells and by the use of other appliances. In Tunis also, where they have expanded since Prévost-Paradol wrote, almost thirty thousand French have settled. In that country many children, both boys and girls, of Sicilian, Maltese, and Greek parents, as well as Tunisian Jews, attend the French schools. And an increasing number of Mohammedan boys of the richer classes also seek the benefits of the French schools. But in Tunis the French have still to learn the importance of assimilating the strangers by opening *much wider* the portals through which the latter may become French citizens.

When the French blundered into Algeria in 1830, they had not the slightest idea how to develop a colony. But in time they learnt in the costly school of experience how to colonize until to-day their administration in Algeria and Tunis—thanks to such able men as Paul Révoil, ex-Governor General of Algeria and the representative of France at the Morocco Conference at Algeciras, Monsieur Jonnart, the present Governor General of Algeria, and René Millet, ex-Resident General of Tunis—is as good as that of the English in India.

Firmly established in Algeria and Tunis, the French Foreign Office was naturally anxious to give such a turn to the solution of the Moroccan question as would safeguard and promote French interests in Algeria. The importance and value of Morocco is due to her geographical position. Astride of the Mediterranean Sea and of the Atlantic Ocean, the Power established in Morocco would control one side of the eastern entrance of the Mediterranean. In addition, owing to the Atlas Mountains, some of whose tops are as high as the Alps, and on some of whose peaks the snow rests almost all the year, Morocco is supplied with that all important element in the laws of Natural economy that is so lacking in Algeria and Tunis, *water*. The moisture borne on the breezes that sweep across the Atlantic are precipitated on the

high peaks of the Atlas, and poured into rivers that give life to the lowlands that lie between the mountains and the ocean and the inland sea.

For a number of reasons France has great and important interests in Morocco. As England dominates the Strait of Gibraltar on one side by her possession of the fortress of Gibraltar, it is of the utmost importance to Algeria that the other side of the Strait should not pass into the hands of another Power but France. It is also of great interest to Algeria to have a free and unobstructed outlet to the Atlantic Ocean for her growing commerce. For that purpose it is necessary that France should control a line of railroad extending from her Algerian railroad system westward through Fez to some Atlantic coast town, such as Mogador or Agadir. Again, the population of Morocco, which is estimated by competent and observing travelers to number from eight millions to twelve millions of people, is of a hardy and warlike spirit. Morocco, owing to the great mountain ranges of the Atlas, which run in a triangular direction from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, is by nature well guarded from an attack from the side of Algeria. But when looked at from the Algerian side of the present frontier, the position is completely reversed, for there is no natural barrier to cover Algeria against an attack from Morocco. If another Power than France be-

came dominant in Morocco, it would be possible for that State to hurl the Moroccan tribes in an attack against Algeria, and so continually menace the western frontier of the latter country. The history of France has turned in large measure upon the weakness of her northeastern frontier. While on every other side, whether towards Switzerland, or Italy, or the Mediterranean, or Spain, or the Atlantic, or the British Channel, France has a naturally strong frontier, towards the northeast, from the Jura Mountains to the North Sea, she lays open and exposed to attack. Many of her continental wars were waged because of the weakness of that northeastern frontier. It was owing to that in part that she lost Canada. With this experience of centuries of a weak frontier line, France does not wish to have her great African colony, Algeria, "*notre Algériè*," as the French say, menaced with a weak western frontier, *vis-à-vis* of a great Power established in Morocco.

In order to secure the preponderance of French influence in Morocco, Monsieur Delcassé, by the Anglo-French treaty of April 8th, 1904, agreed to recognize England's possession of Egypt as an accomplished fact, England in return waiving all her rights in Morocco in favor of France. This settlement was further strengthened by a secret accord on October 6th, 1904, between France and Spain as to their relative rights in the development and admin-

istration of Morocco.<sup>2</sup> In addition, France waived all claim on Tripoli in favor of Italy. Thus the way seemed cleared up for France to undertake the administration of Morocco, much in the same way that England had administered Egypt for twenty-five years.

Just as France was thus about to complete the programme pointed out to her by Prévost-Paradol, and still further turn her thoughts from the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, the Emperor of Germany, taking advantage of the utter defeat and collapse of the military power of Russia in the war with Japan, suddenly at the end of March, 1905, challenged in a dramatic way at Tangier the carefully prepared plans by which France was to become the preponderating Power in Morocco, the western neighbor of the great French colony of Algeria, and so revived the old rivalry between the two antagonists who have struggled for centuries for the possession of Alsace and Lorraine.<sup>3</sup>

The storm center of international politics seems at present "to be bound up in poor Morocco." The Mediterranean Powers—that is England, Spain,

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<sup>2</sup> *Le Droit International: Les Principes, Les Theories, Les Faits* par Ernest Nys, Conseiller à la Cour d'Appel de Bruxelles; Paris and Brussels, 1905, Volume II., pages 101-102. Judge Nys is one of the Belgian members of the permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague.

<sup>3</sup> *Some Facts about Alsace and Lorraine* by Thomas Willing Balch, Philadelphia, 1895. *Restore Metz to France!* by Pan-Aryan, *The Arena*, January 1897, page 293.

France and Italy—have much the same reasons for restraining other nations from establishing a political control in North Africa that we have in preventing European Governments from extending their sovereignty in Central and South America. But the Emperor of Germany, who is to-day at the head of the strongest military power in Europe, thinks that Germany should have something to say about the affairs of Morocco. How the questions to be passed upon by the diplomats assembled at Algeciras will be disposed of by them, it is impossible to predict. Time, however, is, in North Africa, on the side of France, for year by year the number of French citizens in Algeria grows larger.







